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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/21/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [MASS](#) [PREL](#) [GA](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: REPORT OF PRESIDENT'S MILITIA, IRANIAN
TIES

REF: A. BANJUL 744

[1](#)B. 05 BANJUL 319
[1](#)C. BANJUL 698 (ALL NOTAL)

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (B AND D)

JAMMEH BEEFS UP MILITIA

[1](#)1. (C) In recent conversation with Ambassador, Pap Saine (protect) the well-connected chief editor of the private daily, "The Point," asserted that, nine months after the abortive coup plot in March, President Jammeh remained deeply concerned about another possible plot. According to Saine, Jammeh harbored doubts about the loyalty of some military officers and as a result had recently beefed up what Saine termed "Jammeh's secret militia." Saine asserted that this force now numbered 3,000 men and was stationed in remote areas surrounding Jammeh's native village of Kanilai, located about 90 kilometers east of Banjul. Saine claimed that many of these militiamen were of Senegalese origin, from the Casamance region, and members of Jammeh's Jola tribe. He asserted that maintaining this force was a major financial burden for Jammeh and that there was resentment within the regular armed forces over the resources allocated to the militia.

SEEKING HELP FROM THE IRANIANS

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Saine went on to assert that Jammeh, during his recent visit to Iran (ref a), had requested weaponry with an eye to the militia's as well as the regular military's needs. Saine did not know what specific weaponry Jammeh had sought or the Iranians' response. (NOTE: We note that, according to reporting in other channels, the Iranians agreed to supply Jammeh with three electrical generators and 60,000-70,000 tons of oil. END NOTE)

COMMENT

[1](#)3. (C) We find plausible this and previous reports (e.g., ref b) of a secret presidential militia (e.g. ref b), but we have so far been unable to obtain concrete evidence of its existence. It is remarkable that, if indeed the militia exists as a structured, armed organization, such a several-thousand strong force could remain so well hidden from public view. Judging from Saine's account, the reported militia is distinct from the pro-Jammeh vigilante force, known as the "Green Boys," that the GOTG claims was "demobilized" some years ago and now is simply a group of activists with the ruling APRC party. The reported militia

is also distinct from the special military unit, the State Guards, responsible for Jammeh's security at the presidential compound in Banjul. Saine's assertion of Jammeh's concern for renewed coup plotting squares with this source's previous assertion to us (ref c) that former head of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), Harry Sambou, was sacked in November in part due to Jammeh's displeasure over lack of reporting on possible anti-regime scheming in the military.
END COMMENT

STAFFORD